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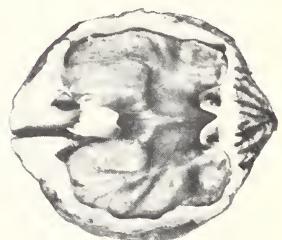
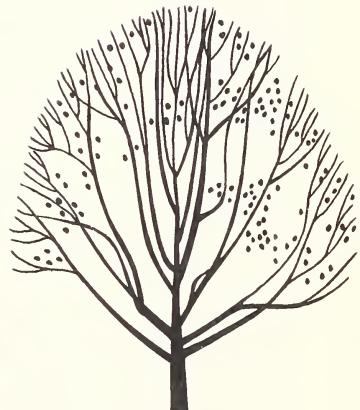


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# GROWING BLACK WALNUTS

## for home use



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



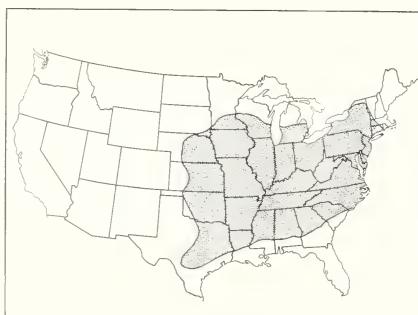
# GROWING BLACK WALNUTS for home use

Information for this publication was furnished by the Crops Research Division and the Entomology Research Division, Agricultural Research Service

The black walnut tree is native to much of the United States east of the Great Plains. It is a desirable shade and ornamental tree, and will produce nut crops on a wide variety of sites and soil types within its natural range. The tree can be grown for shade or ornamental purposes a few hundred miles outside of its natural range, but may not produce nuts there.

To grow black walnuts for home use—

- Plant trees of improved varieties.
- Plant them in early spring on fertile, well-drained soils.
- Provide sufficient moisture and nutrients.
- Control diseases and insect pests.



Area in which the black walnut grows as a native tree.

## VARIETIES

Several improved, grafted varieties of black walnut trees are available. They are far superior to native trees grown from seed.

Three of the most widely planted of the improved varieties are Thomas, Ohio, and Myers. They start bearing nuts the second or third year after they are planted, while native trees do not start bearing nuts until about 10 years after being planted.

At 5 or 6 years of age, Thomas and Ohio each produce about one-fourth of a bushel of nuts, and Myers produces about one-eighth of a bushel of nuts. At 15 to 20 years of age, Thomas and Ohio produce about 2 bushels of nuts, Myers produces about 1 bushel of nuts, and native trees produce about one-fourth of a bushel of nuts.

Nuts produced by native trees usually have thick and heavy shells. Thomas and Ohio nuts have thinner shells, and Myers nuts have the thinnest shells of all.

Walnut anthracnose is the most serious disease of the native trees. Ohio is resistant to the disease, but in years of severe infection it may be defoliated. Myers usually is more resistant to anthracnose than native trees, but less so than Ohio. Thomas is the least resistant of the three improved varieties.

Improved varieties of black walnut



BN-17985

In an "on" year—a year of heavy production—this black walnut tree of the variety Ohio yielded  $16\frac{1}{2}$  bushels of nuts. The tree was 30 years old.

do not come true from seed; they are propagated by grafting scions (twigs) from trees of the desired varieties onto the main stems of 2- or 3-year-old native seedlings. The scions develop into tree crowns that bear nuts of their own varieties.

Little information is available to indicate the best varieties for different localities. Local nurseries usually sell varieties that are best suited to their own localities.

For the greatest possible nut production, plant trees of two or more varieties. Usually, pistillate (female) flowers produce nuts after being pollinated by staminate flowers of the same tree. In very early or very late springs, the pistillate flowers may not be ready

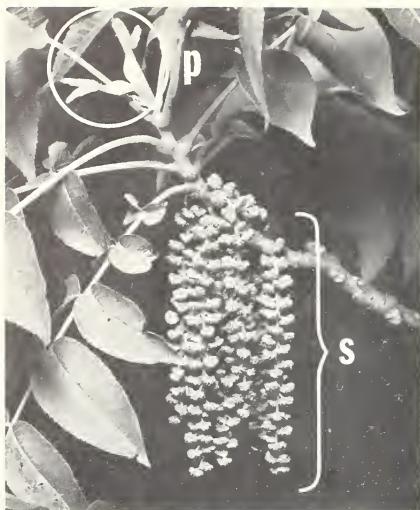
when the pollen is shed. Different varieties have overlapping pollen-receptivity periods and can pollinate each other.

All black walnut trees tend to bear heavy nut crops every second year and light ones in between. Exact cultural practices to offset alternate-year bearing have not been developed.

## PLANTING SITES

Black walnut trees grow best in rich, loose soils of limestone origin that are at least 4 feet deep. Since the trees develop deep taproots, the subsoil should be easily penetrated by roots.

The soil must be well drained and not strongly acid. The trees will not



BN-17988-X

**Flowers of black walnut:** *S*, Staminate (male) flowers; *P*, pistillate (female) flowers.

grow well on bottomland where the soil is often saturated with water. They will not grow well or produce large nut crops on eroded hillsides or other land that will not support good corn crops. Reliable indicators of suitable land are good stands of white oak and tulip-poplar.

## PLANTING TIMES

The most favorable time to plant black walnut trees in most areas is in early spring. New roots will then be able to grow quickly to replace those lost in transplanting.

In the South, you can plant young trees in the fall or winter. But trees planted north of the Ohio and Potomac Rivers in fall and winter will not grow new roots before the ground freezes and may die.

## SPACING

Black walnut trees planted for either ornamental use or nut production should be spaced at least 60 feet apart. Branches and roots will then have enough space in which to spread out.

## SETTING TREES

For trees up to 7 feet tall, dig a hole 2 feet deep and 3 feet wide. Place the tree at the same depth in the hole as it stood in the nursery bed and spread the roots out well. Refill the hole with topsoil. Tamp the soil down around the roots until the ground is firm. Then form a basin around the edge of the hole with extra soil and soak the soil immediately.

## FERTILIZER AND LIME REQUIREMENTS

### Fertilizing

Black walnut trees need large amounts of nitrogen and potassium for best growth and nut production. They need small amounts of phosphorus.

Apply mixed fertilizers each year. Spread them evenly under the tree branches when the buds begin to swell in early spring.

Mixed fertilizers having analyses of 5-10-5 and 10-10-10 give good results. One good rule is to apply 1 pound of 5-10-5 fertilizer, or one-half pound of 10-10-10 fertilizer for each year of tree age. Do not use any during the first spring, however, because of the danger of injuring roots.

To fertilize trees in yards, apply a little more under the branches than you would normally use on your lawn.

Some trees are grown near barns or in stock or poultry yards to provide shade. They benefit from the natural addition of manures and usually flourish.

### Liming

In strongly acid soils, important nutrients are often unavailable to black walnut trees. If your soil is strongly acid, apply enough lime to change the pH to 6 or 6.5. Do not overlime; overliming makes zinc in the soil unavailable to the tree.

Soils east of the Mississippi River

are sometimes deficient in magnesium. Crushed dolomitic limestone—which contains magnesium oxide—will correct this and reduce the acidity of your soil.

Your county agricultural agent can test the soil for its acidity and arrange for an analysis of its nutrient needs. You may also send a soil sample to your State agricultural experiment station for analysis.

## OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Black walnut trees often need to be watered or otherwise cared for to grow well and produce large nut crops.

Because of their deep tap roots, the trees are drought resistant. Keep an area 4 feet in diameter around each tree cleared of weeds and grasses that would compete for water and nutrients. Such cleared areas are not needed for trees planted in yards, but they should be watered regularly while young because of competition with grass for moisture.

The part of your tree that is below the graft may produce suckers. Prune these off at the trunk. Unless removed while small, the suckers may crowd out the shoot growing from the variety scion.

Livestock should not be allowed to graze around young black walnut trees. When the trees are 15 years old, however, they can be interseeded with grasses and legumes. Animals turned in to pasture will not damage these older trees.

## HARVESTING NUTS

Lightly colored walnut kernels have a milder flavor than dark ones. If you prefer light kernels, harvest the nuts as soon as they drop from the trees in the fall. Leaving them on the ground until the hulls partially decompose causes a discoloration of the kernels.

The hulls are thick and fleshy at maturity. They can be mashed and removed by hand, but mechanical devices make the job easier. Vegetable peelers used in restaurants and hand-

power-operated corn shellers will remove the hulls satisfactorily.

The rear wheel of an automobile can be an effective hull remover. Fit one of the rear wheels with a tire chain and jack up the rear with just enough room beneath the tire for the nuts to pass. The chain will remove the hulls as the nuts are forced through a trough below the turning wheel.

After the hulls are off, the nuts should be washed thoroughly and spread out away from direct sunlight to dry. Drying will take 2 or 3 weeks. The nuts can then be stored in a cool, dry place until needed.

It is difficult to extract kernels in large pieces from most varieties of black walnut because of the thick shell and convolutions of the kernel. The nuts can be tempered by soaking them in water for 1 or 2 hours, then keeping them moist overnight in a closed container. The kernels absorb enough moisture to become tough, yet remain loose in the shell.

## DISEASES

The most serious diseases of black walnut are walnut anthracnose and bunch disease. They attack the tree throughout its natural range.

### Walnut Anthracnose

*Symptoms and Damage.*—Walnut anthracnose, or leaf blotch, is a fungus disease that destroys leaves of black walnut trees. It overwinters in fallen leaves, and the first infection by the spores on new leaflets occurs from the middle of May until the middle of June.

Infected leaflets develop many circular, dark-brown spots, ranging from one-sixteenth to five-sixteenths of an inch in diameter. These often merge to form large dead areas with yellow borders. Infected leaflets usually drop from trees by late July or early August.

In years of severe infection, black walnut trees are often entirely defoliated. Many of the nuts are then empty or contain blackened and shriveled kernels. Badly infected trees



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**Black walnut tree in early September, severely defoliated by the anthracnose fungus disease. Many of the nuts fell prematurely; kernels in the remaining nuts were poorly filled.**

grow little, and are greatly weakened and more vulnerable to winter injury.

**Control.**—The disease can be controlled by four applications of a fungicide spray each year. Start the treatment when the walnut leaves approach 12 inches in length, and apply at 2-week intervals. Do not wait for spots to appear before spraying or serious damage will have been done. Trees ranging from 15 to 25 feet tall will need 5 to 10 gallons of spray apiece in each application.

Zineb is the most effective fungicide against anthracnose, but maneb and low-lime bordeaux also give good control. For zineb and maneb sprays, mix 10 tablespoons or 2 ounces of zineb or maneb with 5 gallons of water. For low-lime bordeaux spray, mix 1 cup of lime and  $1\frac{1}{3}$  cups of copper sulfate with 10 gallons of water.

## Bunch Disease

**Symptoms and Damage.**—Bunch disease stunts the growth of black walnut trees and lowers nut production. The

cause of the disease and means of spread and infection are unknown.

Infected trees develop bushy, broom-like shoots on branches in midsummer, and also upright, suckerlike shoots on trunks and main branches. Some shoots die back during late summer, but others are killed during the winter. In addition, leaflets narrow, curl, and turn yellow.

**Control.**—Preventing healthy trees from becoming infected is the only known method of control. This is done by cutting out and destroying all diseased trees as soon as the bushy growth is seen. The disease also attacks butternut, heartnut, pecan, and hickories. If infected, these trees must also be removed.

## INSECT PESTS

The most serious insect pests of black walnut trees are the walnut lace bug, curculios, walnut husk maggot, walnut caterpillar, and fall webworm. These pests and measures to control them are outlined below.



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**Broomlike growth on the trunk and main branches is characteristic of bunch disease of black walnut.**

Serious damage may be caused to the trees in some localities by other leaf-feeding caterpillars, scales, aphids, and twig girdlers. Your county agricultural agent can recommend control measures for them.

## PRECAUTIONS

Insecticides are poisonous. Use them only when needed and handle them with care. Follow the directions and heed all precautions on the container label. Keep insecticides in closed, well-labeled containers, in a dry place where they will not contaminate food or feed, and where children and pets cannot reach them.

In handling any insecticide, avoid repeated or prolonged contact with skin and prolonged inhalation of dusts and mists. After using insecticides, do not continue to wear contaminated clothing. Wash hands and face before eating or smoking.

Many insecticides—including both DDT and malathion—can be used safely without special protective clothing or devices, provided they are in dilute dusts or water sprays. However, most concentrates and oil solutions require special precautions. When handling or mixing concentrates of any insecticide, avoid spilling them on the skin and keep them out of the eyes, nose, and mouth. If any concentrate is spilled, wash it off the skin and change contaminated clothing immediately. If it gets in the eyes, flush with plenty of water for 15 minutes and get medical attention.

Do not allow dairy animals to feed on DDT-contaminated foliage beneath or near the treated trees.

## Walnut Lace Bug

**Description.**—The walnut lace bug is a fragile, fly-like insect one-fourth of an inch long with lacelike wings. It appears in early summer. Two or three generations may be hatched within a season.



The walnut lace bug. (About 8 times natural size.)

**Damage.**—Lace bugs destroy the food-producing capability of leaves by inserting their mouthparts in the undersides of leaflets and sucking out juices. These leaves turn gray and yellow, and some drop prematurely. The nuts are poorly filled and the tree itself is weakened.

**Control.**—Apply insecticide spray to the foliage when the nuts are pea to marble size. If later generations appear, repeat the spray application. Trees 15 to 25 feet tall may need 5 to 10 gallons of spray apiece in each application. Mix a spray solution of 16 level tablespoons of 25-percent malathion wettable powder with 10 gallons of water.

## Curculios

**Description.**—Two species of curculios commonly attack walnut trees. Both species are one-fourth of an inch long, have long curved snouts, and have prominent humps and ridges on their wing covers.

*Damage.*—Beginning in June, the adults feed on newly formed nuts and also on new foliage. The females lay their eggs in crescent-shaped punctures in the nuts. These nuts drop before maturing.

*Control.*—Apply insecticide spray to the foliage when the stigmas of the female flowers start to wither. Trees 15 to 25 feet tall will need 5 to 10 gallons of spray apiece. For the spray, mix 20 level tablespoons of 50-percent DDT wettable powder with 10 gallons of water.

## Walnut Husk Maggot

*Description.*—The walnut husk maggot hatches from eggs laid in the hulls of maturing walnuts. The adult fly is the same size as a house fly, but has dark bands on the wings and a rusty-yellowish body. The flies appear in early July in the South and in late July in the North. They are in the trees for several weeks before starting to lay eggs.

*Damage.*—The maggots feed in the husks (hulls) of maturing walnuts. The quality of the kernels of these nuts is reduced, and fragments of the hulls cling tenaciously to the shells even after cleaning.

*Control.*—A p p l y insecticide-bait spray to foliage when the first flies are seen. Three weeks later a second application may be needed. Trees 15 to 25 feet tall will need 5 to 10 gallons of spray apiece in each application. For the spray, mix 13 level tablespoons of 25-percent malathion wettable powder and 6 level tablespoons of liquid protein hydrolysate bait or 3 level tablespoons of dry protein hydrolysate of yeast to 10 gallons of water.

## Walnut Caterpillar

*Description.*—The walnut caterpillar is the larva of a brown moth. The full-sized larva is 2 inches long, black, and has white hairs. It distinctively raises both ends of the body when disturbed. In the North, there is a single generation in late summer. In the South, there may be two generations, one in early July and the other in early September.

*Damage.*—The caterpillars can entirely defoliate black walnut trees. After hatching from masses of 200 to 300 eggs laid on the undersides of leaflets, they feed in groups on the leaves.

*Control.*—Apply insecticide spray to foliage when caterpillars are first seen. Trees 15 to 25 feet tall will need 5 to 10 gallons apiece. For the spray, mix 1 $\frac{1}{4}$  cups of 50-percent DDT wettable powder with 10 gallons of water.

## Fall Webworm

*Description.*—The fall webworm is the larva of a white moth. The larva reaches 1 inch in length, has black and orange spots, and is hairy. Its presence is indicated by distinctive gray webs that enclose branch tips and leaves. There may be early summer and fall generations.

*Damage.*—The webworms can defoliate black walnut trees. They feed in groups on leaves inside the webs, enlarging the webs as they need more leaves.

*Control.*—Apply insecticide spray to foliage when webworms are first seen. Trees 15 to 25 feet tall will need 5 to 10 gallons apiece. For the spray, mix 1 $\frac{1}{4}$  cups of 50-percent DDT wettable powder with 10 gallons of water. The worms can also be controlled by pruning off the infested branch tips.

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